

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 18006 141819Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /040 W
----- 126099 /63

R 141209Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0045
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 18006

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, IN
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN INDIA

REF: STATE 302523 (NOTAL

1. WE FOUND ECNOMIST ARTICLE ONOPPOSITION STRENGTH IN INDIA
GROSSLY EXAGGERATED AND PROBABLY SELF-SERVING IN TERMS OF ITS
MORE LIKELY SOURCES. (OPPOSITION CONTACT HERE AGREES WITH REFTTEL
THAT IT LOOKS LIKE SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY'S WORK.) OUR PREVIOUS ASSESS-
MENTS OF OPPOSITION REMAIN ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED. OPPOSITION
MPS CURRENTLY ESTIMATE EMERGENCY DETAINEES AT 60-75,000.
WHILE AGREEING THAT ARRESTS CONTINUE WHILE OTHERS ARE BEING RE-
LEASED, THEY DO NOT SEE LARGE NUMBERS OF NEW ARRESTS DES-
CRIBED IN ECONOMIST. WITHOUT GOING THROUGH LONG LIST OF
ALLEGED FACTS, WE AGREE WITH OUR OPPOSITION CONTACT WHO SAYS
IT IS FILLED WITH ASSUMPTIONS, GUESSES, BOASTS (LARGELY
OF JANA SANGH AND RSS EFFECTIVENESS), AND PARTIAL TRUTHS.

2. IT IS TRUE THAT THERE IS INCREASED DISAFFECTION WITHIN
CONGRESS AS WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING ON WEST BENGAL. WE
WILL BE REPORTING FRTHIER ON IMPLICATIONS FOR CONGRESS
PARTY AND POLITICAL IMPACT ON MRS. GANDHI AND SANJAY BUT
WE DO NOT PLACE MUCH WEIGHT ON ECONOMIST'S CLAIMS OF
PROSPECTS FOR OR INFLUENCE OF OPPOSITION. THERE WILL BE
TWO SEPARATE OPPOSITION MEETINGS IN DELHI THIS WEEK, ONE
CALLED BY DMK'S KARUNANIDHI AND THE OTHER BY H.M. PATEL
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OF BLD. SAME PEOPLE WILL ATTEND BOTH GATHERINGS WHICH

ARE DESIGNED TO REVIEW CURRENT SITUATION. WE EXPECT LITTLE FROM EITHER. IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT CONGRESS' POLITICAL STRENGTH HAS WEAKENED IN TERMS OF SOME HYPOTETICAL ELECTION (INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE IN ECONOMIST THAT CONGRESS WOULD HAVE BARELY WON MAJORITY IN AN ELECTION IS WIDELY CREDITED), BUT THIS NOT INDICATE POSITIVE INCREASE IN SUPPORT FOR OPPOSITION BUT DISSATISFACTION WITH CONGRESS POLICIES (NEW DELHI A-311). THE ONLY REAL HOPE OF THE OPPOSITION IS THAT CONGRESS WILL RUIN ITSELF. THERE WAS A POINT WHEN OPPOSITION PLACED GREAT HOPES ON VINOBA BHAVE AS LEADING A SPIRITUAL CRUSADE AGAINST THE EMERGENCY. THAT HAS NOW FADED AND THE PROJECTED ACHARYA SAMMALAN TO BE HELD DECEMBER 25 AND HEADED BY BHAVE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY LEAD NOWHERE (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. ON THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF RSS EFFECTIVENESS, WE ARE AGAIN INCLINED TO DISCOUNT CLAIMS MADE IN ECONOMIST ARTICLE. WE HEAR FROM NUMBER OF SOURCES THAT MANY RSS CADRES ARE NOW ENROLLED IN THE YOUTH CONGRESS. WHETHER THEY ARE THERE AS TROJAN HORSES OR BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE THE "ACTION" IS REMAINS UNCLEAR. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD REPORT FROM BRITISH, WHICH THEY ARE CONVINCED IS TRUE, THAT SANJAY RECENTLY OFFERED TRUCE TO RSS BUT THAT THIS WAS TURNED DOWN. WE ASSUME RSS DOES HAVE CONTINUING ORGANIZATION IN VILLAGES AND TOWNS IN NUMBER OF AREAS, SINCE IT WAS BY FAR MOST EFFECTIVELY ORGANIZED POLITICAL CADRE FORCE IN OPPOSITION BEFORE THE EMERGENCY. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, LITTLE EVIDENCE OF WHAT THEY ARE DOING OTHER THAN POSSIBLY SPREADING RUMORS, TURNING OUT VERNACULAR NEWSLETTERS FROM TIME TO TIME, AND POSSIBLY BEING INVOLVED IN SOME OF THE LARGER AGITATIONS AGAINST FAMILY PLANNING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PARTY STRENGTH, OPPOSITION PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NEWDE18006
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760460-0860
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761245/aaaabmhm.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 302523
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN INDIA
TAGS: PINS, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006